

# GUESSIN' ABOUT SADIE

By SEWELL FORD

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Oh! What about Sadie Sullivan? Why, didn't you hear about her bein' on the other side? Sure! Six or eight months, and she's been movin' in the king row, too. Me? Ah, say! anyone would think I'd been burnin' my ledgers when I was workin' the ivins pump on me! I've been runnin' the studio, and I ain't been usin' any other pup fund, either.

But I'm wise to what you're drivin' at, and I expect you might've well have the whole of that Sir Bertie business. Fact is, I wa'n't lookin' for anything else. When you spring a real candy girl like Sadie on that foreign bunch, and let it get noised around that she has a wad big enough to stuff a mattress with, there's bound to be some excitement among the noble poor.

She hadn't been there a month before we begin to get all kinds of reports. First it was Lord 'Alf'alt, then it's Baron Hochheimer, and next it's Duke Snidewitch, with a few counts and princes on the side; until I wouldn't have been much surprised to hear she was comin' home wearin' a double-decked crown and bringin' a throne as excess baggage. What was I thinkin' all this time? Say, when it comes to plannin' out what Sadie'll do, I don't tackle the job.

"If she's made up her mind to put her stencil on somethin' of that kind," says I, "why, it's hers, that's all. And if she don't want 'em, they'll hear about it."

Along at the last of it, though, I'd kind of lost track of her, and it begun to look as if she'd settled down over there for good; when one day Pinckney shows me her name on the passenger list, and says:

"I suppose you will be down bright and early to see the steamer come in; eh, Shorty?"

"Huh!" says I. "Me waitin' at the dock? For why?"

"But you're anxious to see Sadie again, aren't you, says he."

"What gave you that idea?" says I.

"Oh, ho!" says he, and then snappy black eyes of his opens wide, like he'd dug up somethin' new.

"Ah, lose it!" says I. "You and your 'oh, ho's'!"

But say, just between us, that was only a steer. I'll own up I was some interested. Anyway, I takes pains to be posted on when the boat's sighted off Sandy Hook, when she's due at the pier, and about the time Sadie would be apt to be trippin' down the gang-plank.

"Chee!" says Swift Joe, after I'd phoned for the fourth time, "you must be expectin' someone special on that boat, or is it a bluff?"

"One of them guesses is right, Swift," says I.

But I takes it all out in usin' the wire, stickin' close to the shop all day, and lettin' on to myself that I didn't care where she was or how she looks. Then comes that stuff in the evenin' papers, tellin' about this Sir Bertie Entwistle, who'd come over in the same ship.

Seems he was a good deal of a whale. Sir Bertie was. Not that he's ever done anything special for himself; but he's had the right kind of grandfathers, and has always been mixed up with the swell push, it bein' Waleys and Eddie with him, whenever the doors was shut and the wrapper yanked off a fresh deck. And all that goes to make him the one best bet, so far as the dinner party push goes. The paper says he was met at Quarantine with a bushel basket of invites and they figure out that if he takes 'em all on, one after the other, he could get free board on Fifth avenue for a year.

They'd tried to stand Sir Bertie up for a talk, and get him to give his views on New York as it looked from the saloon deck, opposite Fort Wadsworth; but Bertie has ducked, so they fills out the column describin' the two stunnin' American beauts that was helpin' him hold up the rear. The minute I reads about the one with the copper red hair and the Irish blue eyes, I don't need to see any halftone to know it was Sadie.

"The other may be a peach, too," I think I, "but I'd bet my Sunday school one-two-six if Sadie Sullivan's got her line out."

Which don't mean that I'm feelin' gay about it. I'd been hopin' she'd left all that truck on the far side of the water. This bringin' her over with her though, kind of put frost on the dahlias, and I guess I wa'n't none too cheerful. It was when I was right in the middle of my grouchy that I'm rung up by Mrs. Purdy Pell. Now I want to mark it up that she means well most of the time. Mrs. Purdy Pell does; and the way she puts it to me about my bein' down on the list for a little welcome home dinner was givin' that night was on the level.

"Of course," says she, "you are one of Sadie's old friends, and I wouldn't think of leavin' you out; but—"

"Sure!" says I. "I'm much obliged, too. And it's too bad, ain't it, that me havin' a date with her Sunday school class may make me hand in the regrets?"

"So sorry," says she. "Sir Bertie Ellwistle is to be with us, you know. But you'll come if you can?"

"Don't let the soup get cold waitin' for me, though," says I.

And with that I rubs the whole proceedin' off the slate. Sadie and me had been good friends for quite some time, and we'd thought it over or less well of each other, even after she got to travellin' high; but I didn't have to figure long to see that if she'd entered here for the Sir Bertie sweepstakes there wa'n't any use in me hangin' over the fence. It was for the back-ground, lookin' as pleasant as I knew how. You couldn't blame Sadie, could I? I didn't. Never could find much fault with her program, anyway.

Just by way of keepin' my courage up, though, I plans out a little solitary celebration of my own. I goes the limit, too, includin' evenin' clothes, cab, and orderin' dinner at the swellest joint on Broadway. That's where I was, under the pink candle shade, guessin' at which fork come next, and havin' an expensive and lonesome time of it, when I looks up and sees Pinckney makin' for me in tow of the head waiter. I could account for how he happened to locate me, as I'd left word at home; but why he wa'n't at the Purdy Pells with the rest of the bunch was a puzzler. He don't give me a chance to ask, either.

"Well, you're a nice one, Shorty," says he.

"There's times when I almost believe myself," says I, "and then again—"

"Why aren't you at Mrs. Purdy Pell's dinner?" says he.

"Maybe my reason's as good as yours," says I.

"Nonsense!" says he. "Tell me this, though: you were asked, weren't you?"

"Hoow foolish!" says I. "Sure!"

"And you knew it was for Sadie?" he goes on.

"She mentioned that, too," says I. "I guess 'ain't bein' much missed, though."

"Well," says he, "you have guessed wrong, and by actin' the chump you've stirred up all kinds of a row. Sadie thinks you were left out, and insists that if you had been invited you would be there; and Mrs. Purdy Pell wants to know if her word is doubted, and—"

"Hold on!" says I. "Let's get this straight. Has Sadie sent out a call for me?"

"I'm the messenger," says Pinckney. "Then you win," says I. "Hey, garsoon, laddish-on—the check—the bill of damages—and shake it up, or your dollar tip'll look like a lead quarter! Come on, Pinckney!"

I had sawed off the food list just before the woodcock, and I and Pinckney has quit at the roast; but neither of us was kickin' on that account. It was havin' the hansom jammed in a cross town block that gets us wrothy. It puts our schedule on the friz; so when we fin'ly does show up at Mrs. Purdy Pell's it's all over but the coffee, and that's bein' passed around in the front rooms, where the men can hit up the panetelas and cork tips.

Now, all the way up I'd been gettin' chesty over the way things has turned out, and when Pinckney leaves me while he goes to make his report, I braces myself to stand the shock of havin' someone fall on my neck right there in public. It looked like somethin' of the kind was due, didn't it? I was in demand, wa'n't I? Hadn't Sadie raised a row because she thought I'd been handed a blue ticket? Well, well! I backs up into a corner, under a date palm growin' out of a thousand-dollar Jap vase, and tries to look unsuspicious.

And sure enough, inside of a couple of minutes, here comes Sadie herself, plikin' straight at me, with her finger held up and her lips pouted out like she was goin' to say, "Naughty, naughty!" Gee! but she was lookin' like a winner, too! She's wearin' one of them tomato bisque dined Paquin dreams, such as the custom house sleuths look for in trunk bottoms, and she'd had the latest architecturin' done to that copper hair; and you could see by her arms she'd taken on ten or twelve pounds, just enough to balance right while she's been gone, but she's the old Sadie, just the same.

"Now! aren't you ashamed of yourself, Shorty McCabe?" says she, reachin' out both hands and gettin' a grip on mine.

"I'm worse'n that, Sadie," says I, as we strikes the London-bridge-is-fallin'-down pose.

"Well," says she, "what's the answer?"

"You'll never get it from me," says I. "For now I've had a look at you, it don't seem any more sensible than a bad dream. Gee! but you're all right, Sadie!"

"Blarney!" says she, tearin' off one of them laughs of hers and givin' me the finger squeeze, until it seems all the chandeliers has been turned on at once.

Well, we was right in the midst of a two-sided game of jolly, when out from the other side of the palm steps a big, good-looking, rich-tinted girl, with a red rose in her black hair. She's all got up in white silk, quiet and modest appearin', one of the kind that looks good enough to eat. She wa'n't lookin' happy, though. It was easy to guess she wa'n't bitin' her upper lip because she thought it tasted good, and she has her chin down like she was bein' sent home from school.

"Why, Peggy Hubbard?" says Sadie, grabbin' her. "Where have you been hiding ever since dinner?"

"Right there," says Peggy, pointin' to a seat behind the vase, "just where I was left—stranded!"

"What?" says Sadie. "You don't mean that he—"

"Perhaps he forgot," says I.

"He went off with a Mrs. Britton, Bailey, and—"

"Oh—her!" says Sadie, the curve straightenin' out of her mouth, and red spots flushin' up under her eyes. Then she takes a quick look around the room. Peggy, I want you to know Mr. McCabe. Wait here until I—

"But I—I want to go home," says Peggy.

Sighs, their hair clipped short, their shoes shining, their eyes bulging with horror and plain gold rings in their vest pockets.

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